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The House of Sand

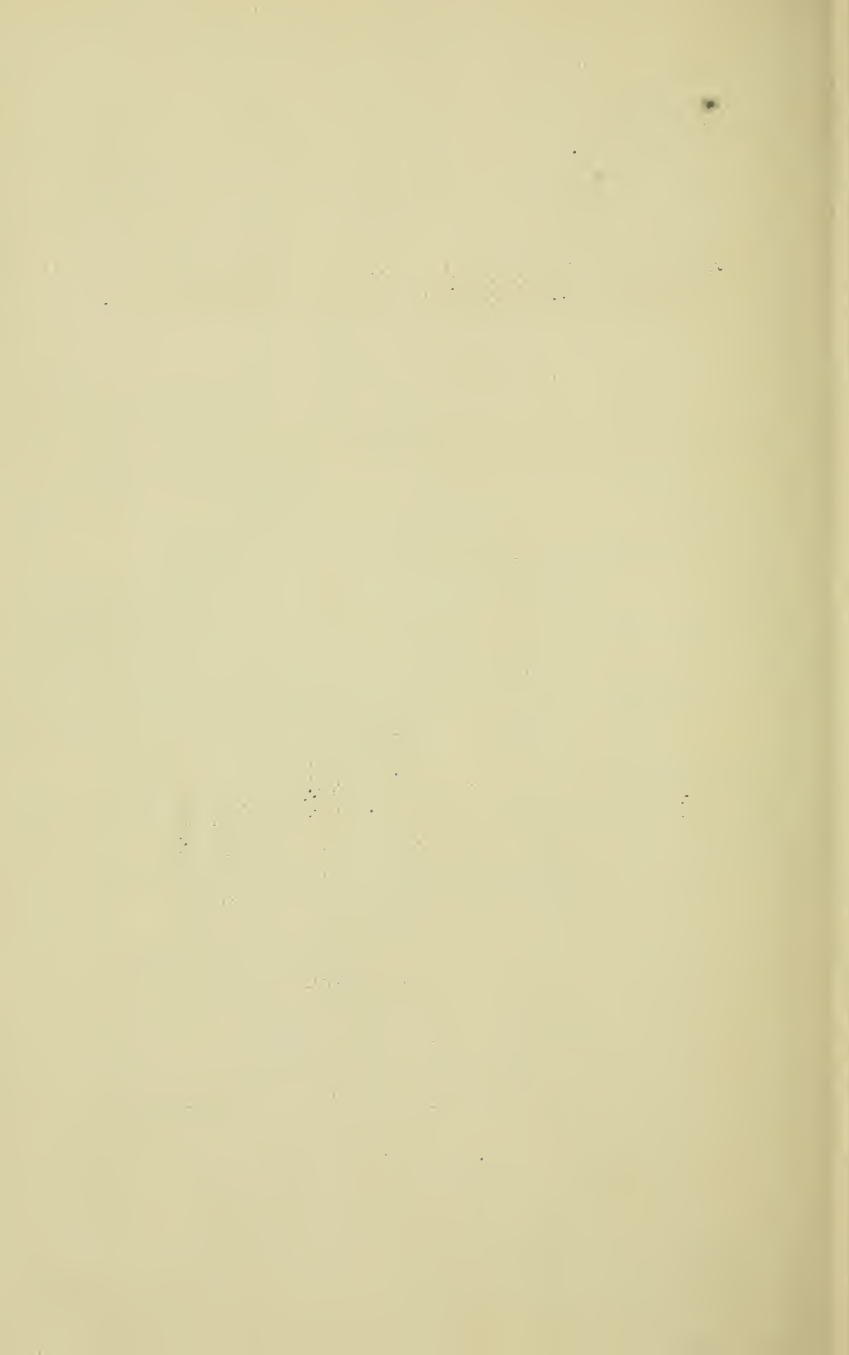
IGNATIUS WALSH



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The House of Sand

A MEDIATED TRAGEDY
IN FOUR ACTS

BY

IGNATIUS WALSH

19



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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MR. JOHN GORMLEY, *a philanthropic millionaire.*

MRS. GORMLEY, *his wife.*

PATRICIA GORMLEY, *their daughter.*

FRANCIS CLINTON, *a former friend and associate of Gormley.*

MR. MCAULIFFE, *a friend of Gormley.*

MRS. FORTIN, *wife of a former acquaintance of Gormley.*

GERALDINE FORTIN, *her daughter.*

GRAHAME TALBOT, *husband of Geraldine Fortin.*

TERENCE O'DONOVAN, *a privileged servant.*

ANDREW, *a servant.*

JORDAN, *Gormley's private secretary.*

MARSTON, *Gormley's stenographer.*

MR. STANLEY, *a friend of Talbot.*

Office boy.

MORGAN } *Two thieves.*
HOWARD }

Reporters (*five*).

Club members (*six*).



ACT I.

THE DISCOVERY.

Scene 1. Wealthy home.

(Back parlor of the Gormley home. Patricia Gormley discovered at the piano. Begins to play as curtain rises. Song: Sweet and Low. John Gormley enters with daily paper, about to read; glances affectionately at daughter, lays paper on table; puts his arm around her shoulder and turns music.)

PATRICIA *(after song is over, as Gormley moves to his easy chair)*: Oh, daddy, you look so tired.

MRS. GORMLEY *(entering)*: Yes, John, you do look tired. Are you sick, dear?

GORMLEY *(wearily)*: O, I'm all right, only—

PATRICIA *(rising hastily and dropping down near her father's feet)*: Only what, daddy?

MRS. GORMLEY *(anxiously)*: Did you—did you lose more today, John?

GORMLEY *(throwing aside paper in despair)*: Yes, yes, Lucille, I did lose more today. *(Loud peal of door bell. Gormley starts nervously up half out of the chair.)* What was that? *(Daughter and wife regard him anxiously; servant enters.)*

SERVANT: Mr. McAuliff, sor, and another gintleman to sae you about the parochial charity organization. They said, if you were in, to tell you that it was very important, and that they had to make some arrangemints for those families tonight.

GORMLEY *(half rising from chair)*: Well, I suppose

I must— (*Wearily, upon second thought.*) O, tell them I'm not in, Terence.

MRS. GORMLEY: But, John, you're chairman of the committee, and they depend upon you principally for the financial support.

GORMLEY: I'm too tired, Lucille.

MRS. GORMLEY: Very well, John. (*To Terence*): Tell the gentlemen that Mr. Gormley is indisposed.

TERENCE: All right, mum. I'll tell thim that the mather is indishposed to sae thim.

PATRICIA and MRS. GORMLEY (*in chorus, horrified, hands raised in protest*): Mercy, no! Don't do that.

GORMLEY (*wearily*): Say that I'm away from home.

TERENCE: All right, sor, I'll tell thim that you said you're away from home. (*Exit Terence.*)

MRS. GORMLEY (*putting her arm around his neck*): Come, cheer up, dear, tomorrow you'll recover all you have lost.

PATRICIA: Yes, do cheer up, daddy. I'll sing your favorite song for you. (*Song—Selected.*) (*Meantime Gormley sits with his forehead on his hand; Mrs. Gormley looks worried. Suddenly at the window a tramp's face appears; he scrutinizes the room intently for three or four minutes and also the occupants, whose backs are towards him, all except Patricia who is turned two-thirds away from him. Gradually the music reacts on Gormley and he turns around toward the piano. At sight of Gormley's profile the tramp at the window gives a start of surprise; then, glueing his eyes to the pane, he stares intently for half a minute at Gormley, then disappears.*)

PATRICIA (*turning around after finishing the song and catching a glimpse of the face at the window*): O, father, look at that man!

GORMLEY (*jumping up*): Where, where?

PATRICIA: The window. (*Sinks into a chair. Mrs. Gormley greatly perturbed. Gormley opens window and looks out.*)

GORMLEY: I can't see anyone. You must have im-

aged it. But, no, here are tracks in the snow! Terence! Terence!

(Mrs. Gormley rings servant's bell. Enter Terence with telegram; also two other servants. Great hubbub. Patricia and Mrs. Gormley go over and lean out of window examining tracks.)

GORMLEY: Here, Andrew and Thomas, get some more of the servants together and search the whole grounds to see if you can find a tramp around here. But be careful not to destroy these footprints in any way. I'll be out there in a moment myself to examine them and see where they lead to. Now, Terence, I want you—What's that in your hand?

TERENCE: A telegram that just came for you, sor.

(Gormley opens and reads.)

GORMLEY *(jubilantly)*: Lucile, Lucile! I didn't lose. I won! won!

(Patricia and Mrs. Gormley hurry over eagerly and gaze at the telegram over his shoulder.)

PATRICIA: Oh, daddy, I'm so glad; now you won't be unhappy any more.

MRS. GORMLEY: I knew that the tide would turn soon, dear. Everything was for the best.

GORMLEY: Yes, dears; now I can— *(Cries without; lights visible through the window.)* But I must go and trace those footsteps. You go to bed; don't wait up for me.

PATRICIA: Good night, daddy.

MRS. GORMLEY: Good night, John. *(Exeunt.)*

GORMLEY: Well, come along, Terence; we shall try to find that tramp, if he's around here. *(Exeunt.)*

Scene 2. Library—Gormley Home.

About one week later.

(Gormley discovered reading. Enter Terence.)

TERENCE: There's a gentleman waiting at the front

door, who wants to sae you, sor. He's rather shabbily dressed, so Oi did not know whether you would want to sae him or not.

GORMLEY: O, admit him. (*Exit Terence.*) (*Wearily*): I suppose it's more charity.

(*Enter Francis Clinton, neatly, but shabbily, dressed.*)

GORMLEY (*laying aside paper*): Well, my friend, what can I do for you? (*Reaching down into his pocket for money.*) You know there are regular, definite channels of charity for the needy; you should apply there. I hope that this will be sufficient for your present wants. (*Tenders him a bill.*)

CLINTON: John Gormley, do you recognize me?

GORMLEY: Sir, how dare you take the liberty of thus addressing me? And yet— That voice is familiar. Who are you, sir?

CLINTON (*removing his hat and lowering his coat collar*): Thirty years have made some difference, then? I have altered somewhat since we left college together to seek our fortunes in the Klondike district.

GORMLEY: Frank Clinton! (*Rising and peering in Clinton's face.*) What do you want here? When we parted each agreed to go his own way and let the other alone. I have observed my part of the contract.

CLINTON (*coughs violently*): Yes, that was when we parted. But since then I have learned many things; I have studied in the school of experience; I have been taught by that hard taskmaster, Adversity. I have come to regard life, the world and everything in it in a very different light.

GORMLEY: O, you have, have you? Well, what do you want? I am very busy.

CLINTON: Let me tell you a little story, Gormley—it won't take long and it will be worth your while to hear it. Early in 1886 two young men, just graduated from college, emigrated to the newly-discovered goldfields of Alaska. Those two young men, Gormley, were you and I—roaming college pals. For five months we toiled in—

dustriously only to find ourselves at the end of that time freezing, starving, penniless, completely disheartened. Then, in utter despair, I one night stole into Fortin's shack, murdered the man as he lay there sleeping, and (*racking cough*) I took his money—took the money of the man who had made the largest pile of all in the Yukon region. But as I was leaving the cabin another man saw me, saw what I had done, and caught me. (*Here Gormley, who has been fidgeting, leaps up and begins to pace the room.*) He was stronger than I, and so he subdued me. But, instead of turning me over to the tender mercies of the camp, he offered me my freedom at the price of half my stolen wealth—and I accepted the offer. That man was— (*Coughs.*)

GORMLEY (*excitedly*): It's false, it's false. You have no evidence against me.

CLINTON (*coughing*): John Gormley, do you remember that paper we signed, each professing his share in the crime, and of which each took a copy, so that one could not betray the other without also involving himself? Take care!

GORMLEY (*feverishly; Gormley leans across table and stares, like a man at bay, into Clinton's eyes. Clinton is seated L. C.*): Well, what do you want with me? You had your share. Why are you haunting me? Why do you dog my steps? Think of my wife and daughter. Would you expose me to them? Think of my social position. Would you ruin me before the world? I once spared you. That is the only crime I ever committed; and must I still suffer for that?

CLINTON: That is the only crime you ever committed? With that half million, stolen from the widow and orphan of a murdered man, you got your start. On that crime your whole fortune is built. You have never made restitution for that act! (*Coughs.*) I am a sick man, Gormley, and I dare not face my Maker with this guilt upon my soul. All my money is gone—squandered after I left you. Would to Heaven I had seen my crime in its true light while I still had means to make amends.

For twelve years I have searched for you. You were my associate in crime; it lies in your power to make restitution, and make it you must. (*Rises and continues passionately*): John Gormley, such men as you are the ruin of society; you resort to any means to get your start in life, and then you become holy and saintly. Is not the name of John Gormley famous from coast to coast as a charity worker, a philanthropist, a pillar of the Church? And, meantime, the wife and child of the man you helped to rob are dying in want. Your life is like a house of sand that children build on the seashore—only it's weaker, pitifully weaker; instead of being made even of sand, it's made only of lies, lies, and it's built upon a crime. It was preordained that some day a wave of truth should wash those falsehoods and that hypocrisy away, just as the waters sport with the sand. Believe me, Gormley, if I had the money I would not hesitate. (*Drops into a chair utterly exhausted and coughs violently.*)

GORMLEY (*who, all during this talk, has been pacing up and down, chewing a cigar and nervously clenching and unclenching his hands behind his back*): Oh, I see you've gotten religion. (*Snarlingly*): It's a nice time you got it, but you can't intimidate me. (*Drawing a revolver from the drawer of the library table.*) Frank Clinton, either you give me that paper, or—

CLINTON (*wearily*): Don't; it's no use. I'm not afraid to die, because I'm not long for this world, anyhow. Besides, I haven't the paper with me. I have put it in the hands of a man who will know how to use it if I don't return within a certain time. Yes, I got religion—I wish I had gotten it sooner. (*Sadly.*)

GORMLEY (*letting arm fall slowly to table and his head dropping on his chest. Silence for a minute. Clinton coughs horribly*): It's true; it's true. O why is it true? But what can I do? Think of my wife, my daughter. A loss of half a million at this time will ruin me, utterly ruin me; and they have been brought up in luxury. I can't deprive them of these things they have

always been used to. Name your own sum and leave me—leave me alone. (*Reaches for check book.*)

CLINTON: Gormley (*Coughs*), I have made mistakes in my life—many mistakes; but I never have and (*Raises voice*), with the help of God, I never will stoop to blackmail. (*Drops voice.*) There is only one way. You must restore the money to Fortin's wife and daughter. I'll give you two months to make restitution; then—

GORMLEY (*with head on arms, despondent—moaning*): My wife, my daughter; Patricia, Lucile!

CLINTON (*arising and preparing to leave*): Two months to decide, and then I shall return. Two months. Goodbye. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter Terence. Finds Gormley gazing blankly into space.*)

TERENCE: Mr. Gormley—

GORMLEY (*reviving*): Help me to bed, Terence. (*Gormley shuffles off, leaning upon Terence.*)

Scene 3. Back parlor or sitting room of Gormley home.

One month later.

(*Mrs. Gormley and Patricia discovered in earnest conversation.*)

MRS. GORMLEY: I wonder, child, what is it makes your father so sad and gloomy and morose for this past month. It is not like him. (*Slight pause. Mrs. Gormley continues*): It can't be money matters, because I know that business has picked up wonderfully. (*Pause of two or three minutes.*)

PATRICIA (*hesitatingly*): Could—could it be Alfred? You know his birthday comes next month.

MRS. GORMLEY (*starts—then, sadly*): Yes, his birthday comes next month. My poor little baby boy. He must be a big boy now (*Swallows hard*) if—if he's living. But, hush, here comes your father.

(Enter Gormley, slightly grayer about temples, furrows of care deeper.)

PATRICIA *(running up and putting her arm around his neck)*: What's the matter, daddy?

GORMLEY *(wearily)*: Nothing; nothing. *(Makes an effort to arouse himself. Eyes his wife sharply.)* You have been crying, Lucile. *(Mrs. Gormley is silent.)* *(Solicitously)*: What's the trouble, dear? *(Looking at Patricia.)* You've been weeping, too.

MRS. GORMLEY *(convulsively)*: O, John, do you know what month next month is?

GORMLEY *(wonderingly)*: Why, next month is—*(Pauses, horror-stricken.)* Don't mind, Lucile; he's happier now.

MRS. GORMLEY *(agonizedly)*: O, John, don't say that! I have always hoped to see Alfred again, ever since he has been lost. Don't say that, John.

GORMLEY *(sadly)*: I'm afraid there is no hope, dear. Twenty-two years is a long, long time.

(Enter Terence.)

TERENCE: Gentleman to see you, sor, and he says to tell you if you are out to be in.

GORMLEY: What kind of a gentleman is he, Terence?

TERENCE: O, he's much the same as iny ither human beast—he has good clothes, bad looks and you can't tell a thing about his heart from the outside. It's your friend, Mr. McAuliffe, sor. Shall I show him in?

GORMLEY: Bring him in.

(Exit Terence.)

MRS. GORMLEY: We'll leave you alone with your caller, John.

(Exeunt Patricia and Mrs. Gormley. Enter Mr. McAuliffe followed by Terence. Gormley rises and welcomes McAuliffe. They shake hands.)

GORMLEY: How are you, McAuliffe? Terence, help him off with his coat.

MCAULIFFE *(to Terence, who had helped him off*

with his coat): Yes, Terence, here is something to stop that wagging tongue of yours for a while. (*Gives Terence a cigar. Terence, behind Gormley's and McAuliffe's backs, examines the cigar, smells it. Then he deftly drops it into McAuliffe's overcoat pocket.*)

TERENCE (*aside*): You never can tell by the looks. Excuse me. (*Makes mock bow to McAuliffe behind the latter's back.*) (*Exit.*)

McAULIFFE: That's a jewel of a servant you have, Gormley. One evening I was here that bold Hibernian informed me that you were out. But I said to him: "That can't be; I had an appointment with Mr. Gormley." Whereupon up spoke Terence: "Now don't you be after disputing with me," he said, "the master of the house himself just said he was out, and he ought to know." That was a clincher. (*They laugh.*)

GORMLEY: Yes, Terence is a fine servant—a favorite with all the family, in fact; but he is impossible, utterly impossible.

McAULIFFE (*pauses for a few moments, each smiling at his own thoughts of Terence. Suddenly becoming serious*): We received a rather unusual request for charity today, Gormley, and I called to see you about it. A poor fellow who has seen a good many of the ups and downs of life, I guess, asked for assistance. He said to mention the initials "F. C." to you and you would recommend him. (*Gormley, who has been fidgeting, here gets up and begins to pace the room, hands working nervously behind his back.*)

GORMLEY (*muttering*): One month, one month more. My wife; my daughter. (*Collecting his wits, but rather dazed*): Certainly, help him. It's our duty to help him—to help every one in straitened circumstances.

McAULIFFE: He's very religious, but he's somewhat deranged on the subject of society. He says it's mostly rotten; that men embrace any crime in the calendar to obtain wealth, and then, rising to affluence on their ill-gotten gains, become pious hypocrites and philanthropists. O, he's bitter. Still a great deal of it's true, no

doubt. I must admit that to you, even though we are wealthy ourselves.

GORMLEY (*coming to a halt and speaking passionately*): Must a man be punished all his life for one crime? Must he be punished thirty years after he has obtained his wealth by a crime? Cannot his crime be forgotten and forgiven in that time? How can he make restitution? Think of his wife and his children. Would these fellows have him deprive his wife and children of the luxury they have been accustomed to and give it to people who have never known luxury? Oh, these reformers make me tired. I think I will go away for a short vacation. (*Rings bell.*) You please take my position as chairman of the Charity Committee while I'm away, will you? Good-night, McAuliffe.

McAULIFFE: Good-night, Gormley. (*Exit.*) (*Enter Terence.*)

GORMLEY: Please tell Mrs. Gormley that I would like to see her, Terence. You may say to her that I am going away tonight for a short vacation. (*Exeunt—Gormley one side, Terence other.*)

ACT II.

THE ATTEMPT AND THE FAILURE.

Scene 1. Gormley's office—two weeks later.

(Gormley discovered hard at work; a private secretary and a stenographer also busy at work. Working for a few minutes. Enter office boy.)

OFFICE BOY: Gentleman to see you.

GORMLEY: I'm out. *(Querulously.)* *(Gormley, more wrinkled and grayer, pauses in his work several times; rubs his forehead with his hand; goes over and takes drink; his hand trembles very noticeably. Returns to desk. Private Secretary interviews him about some business matters. Stenographer answers telephone—leaves office with papers.)*

GORMLEY *(wearily)*: Jordan, you finish this matter. I'm not feeling well. You can take these papers over to Taylor now. And on your way out tell the boy to bring me in this afternoon's paper.

(Exit Jordan.)

(Gormley arises and moves restlessly about. Enter office boy.)

OFFICE BOY: Here's the paper, sir.

(Gormley turns pages of paper for about three minutes. Suddenly he bends forward intently, his eyes glisten; he jumps up.)

GORMLEY: Is it possible? Is it true? Can it be? *(Reads newspaper item)*: "In a ward of the County Hospital there died yesterday morning another human

derelict. Francis Clinton was just another floater, just another outcast gone and never missed." Gone! No need for restitution now. Why impoverish Lucile and Patricia now? Never. And I had only two weeks more. What a narrow escape!

OFFICE BOY (*sticking head in door*): Did you ring, sir?

GORMLEY (*starts*): You red-headed, freckled face—(*Checks himself and regains his composure.*) Come here, young man.

(*Enter office boy. Gormley turns his back to him. Office boy cranes his neck and looks him over thoroughly. Gormley adjusts glasses, turns and regards office boy, sternly.*)

GORMLEY: Young man, I ought to dismiss you for your insolence. (*Office boy makes a wry face.*) But I won't. I want you to take a message to my wife; I have no time to write it. Tell her and my daughter to meet me in an hour and to be dressed for the opera. If she wants to know why, tell her it's a little celebration. Now hurry. (*Office boy starts to move away.*) Here (*tenders office boy a dollar bill*), have a celebration yourself, only hurry (*Gormley turns back to office boy. Office boy, amazed, takes bill, feels it, examines it by holding it up to light; walks around on tip-toes behind Gormley and nods his head.*)

GORMLEY (*turning*): Aren't you gone yet, you sloth—

OFFICE BOY: Ye-es, yes; that is, I'm going directly, sir. (*Exit.*)

(*Gormley begins to smoke. Noise without. Office boy says, "Yes, right in there." Enter Reporters.*)

SPOKESMAN OF REPORTERS: Mr. John Gormley, I believe. We are reporters representing the Sun, the Herald, the Post, the Blade and the Clarion.

GORMLEY (*genially*): Well, what can I do for you, gentlemen? Here, have a cigar.

REPORTER: Thank you. Are you not a member of

the Charity organization of St. Lawrence parish—the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, in fact?

GORMLEY: I have that honor.

REPORTER: Just what do you hope to achieve by erecting that new home for the worthy poor?

GORMLEY (*piously*): Why, the comfort of the destitute, first and last. I believe it is our duty to our fellows to restore them to the better conditions, which they were accustomed to, until poverty blighted their lives. I believe that God looks for this from us—expects us to make restitution to the poor people for what the world has deprived them of. I try to do my duty as a Christian. I think the cause a very worthy one.

REPORTER: You have endowed the new institution, have you not, Mr. Gormley; and is it not to be known by your name?

GORMLEY: Yes, I have endowed it and, I believe, it is to bear my name.

(*Enter Jordan.*)

REPORTERS: Thank you, Mr. Gormley.

GORMLEY: That's all right, gentlemen; call any time you wish. I'm always at your service. (*Bows; exeunt reporters.*) Well, Jordan?

JORDAN: A letter for you. I did not open it—it's marked "Private" very emphatically. (*Hands Gormley letter. Gormley takes letter, examines exterior speculatively; finally opens it and reads it. It flutters from his fingers to the floor. He falls forward, supporting himself by his hands on his desk. Jordan notices him after about a minute and rushes over to him.*)

JORDAN: Are you sick, Mr. Gormley? Shall I call in Dr. Forbes? (*Gormley recovers by great effort after about half a minute.*)

GORMLEY: I'm going home, Jordan; call the car. I'll wait till I get home to see the doctor. (*Jordan helps Gormley on with his coat, then leads him out. Stenographer returns, sees note; picks it up and peruses it. Jordan re-enters.*)

JORDAN: Did you see anything of a letter, Marston?

MARSTON: Is this it?

JORDAN (*crossing to him*): Yes; Mr. Gormley became so sick after reading it he had to go home.

MARSTON: Sick? There is nothing here to make him sick. Why listen: "Dear Sir—Mr. Francis Clinton died this morning. He has entrusted to me a certain paper, which is of great interest and concern to you, with instructions to deliver it to you as soon as you fulfill certain conditions. Yours, Grahame Talbot." Nothing in that to make him sick.

JORDAN: Well, he became sick very suddenly, anyway. File it away. I'm going over to Mr. Taylor's office. (*Exeunt.*)

Scene 2. Library of Gormley home.

Time—about 11:30 o'clock at night.

(*Gormley, alone, smoking cigar. Paces around room, glances nervously out of window; is startled by a noise from left. Drops into a chair, picks up a book and makes a vain attempt to read it. Finally he is rewarded by noise at window; goes to window and whispers with some one. Admits them himself by front door. The whole house is asleep. Enter Gormley, leading two men, well dressed.*)

GORMLEY: Now, speak low whatever you do. We don't want to wake anyone. (*Goes to doors L. and C. R. and listens carefully. Returns. Tries to conceal his disgust for them and his shame at the whole affair.*) Well, did you get the paper?

HOWARD: We ransacked his room at the hotel thoroughly, and we could not find it. We are convinced that he has it on his person. We have another plan, though, but it will cost you more, because we run a greater risk.

GORMLEY (*apprehensively*): Don't use violence. I don't want to become involved in a murder trial. We

must not kill him, except as a last resort. No—don't use violence.

HOWARD: No violence at all, sir; no commotion; no clue. Everything done without the police getting wind of it at all. And we get that paper.

GORMLEY (*unconsciously raising his voice and half rising from his chair*): But how, man? How are you going to do it? (*Glancing around fearfully and instinctively lowering his voice*): Do it and I'll make it worth your while.

HOWARD: We'll shadow him until we get an opportunity; and then—the poisoned needle. It's the work of an instant—a quick jab in the back through overcoat and all; he is drugged immediately and we carry him off and secure the paper at our leisure. It's very simple.

GORMLEY (*anxiously*): Yes; but isn't there any fear, any danger, that is, any possibility of killing him. Think of the disgrace; and I don't want to ha-hang.

HOWARD: Not the least danger. We'll see to that—never fear.

GORMLEY: Well, go ahead—do it. I must have that paper. I can't deprive my wife and daughter of the comfort they have always been used to. Restitution? Bosh! I have already made restitution by all my charities. I don't owe Fortin's wife and child anything. (*The two thieves have been exchanging meaning looks during this talk. Gormley suddenly remembers their presence—realizes that he has been talking too freely.*) You are, of course, to bring me the paper sealed and then I will pay you the rest; and (*Fixing them sternly with his eyes*) it goes without saying that you are not to mention to anyone what has passed between us, or—anything I may have said tonight. That is part of our agreement, and it is only on these terms I hire you. (*Thieves gravely nod acquiescence while Gormley is looking at them, but exchange meaning glances and nods as soon as he turns his back.*) All right; let me know when you have a good chance. (*Noise as of window rattling.*) Hurry, gentle-

men; let us break up the meeting. But wait here until I see if any of the servants are stirring. (*Exit.*)

MORGAN (*when Gormley has gone*): Give him the paper sealed, indeed! (*Laughs unpleasantly.*)

HOWARD: Forget what he said tonight! Yes. Certainly we have a fine hold on the old Cræsus. We'll bleed him nicely. Give him the paper! Just think of all the money it is worth to us. The old fellow dreads disgrace, you know, and if we had it—well, we might expose it to some people if he did not yield to our demands. (*Chuckles softly.*)

MORGAN: Great idea! But here he comes. (*Gormley appears in doorway.*)

GORMLEY: Come on, gentlemen. Not a word now. (*Exeunt on tiptoes amid profound silence.*)

Scene 3. Night. Dimly lighted street.

(*A few people hurry along street. Enter thieves.*)

HOWARD: He passed this way not a good hour ago, and back this way he'll sure return.

MORGAN: Where shall we wait?

HOWARD: I have found a hiding place. As he comes along we'll walk down the street in advance of him, but more slowly than he. Then you accidentally jostle him and I'll use the needle.

MORGAN: We'll carry him off to your place of concealment then and the rest will be easy. But what about the paper? Are you going to give it to Gormley?

HOWARD: Give it to him? I should say not. With that paper in our possession Mr. John Gormley will become our banker. I rather inferred from the remarks he let slip that he would not want the contents of that document exposed.

MORGAN: Yes, yes; I know. But we won't get the rest of our money until we give him the paper, and—

HOWARD: We'll give him a paper, all right, but it

won't be *the* paper, and if I know— Hush, here comes some one. (*Exeunt stealthily.*)

STANLEY: Do I know Mr. John Gormley, you ask? Why, certainly, any one that's anybody at all in this city knows him, and let me assure you that he's a man worth knowing. Never have I met a more perfect gentleman, nor a more generally respectable man. It's impossible to tell all the good that man has done by his philanthropic work. He is universally esteemed.

TALBOT: So I hear everywhere. I have never met him myself, but I hope to have that pleasure in the near future. I assure you I am not a little curious about meeting a man so generally lauded.

STANLEY: Your curiosity will be amply satisfied. You can trust him implicitly in any business enterprise or dealing you may have with him. Would that more of our wealthy people had his honesty and then so much of our society would not be built upon a rotten foundation. (*Talbot makes as if to remonstrate, but Stanley stops him.*) O, some of them become honest enough and outwardly respectable after they have accumulated wealth, but the hitch is with the start—they build on a smouldering volcano which is liable to explode any time. Crime will out, you know. You'll meet a rare man when you encounter Gormley—"a man far less for wealth than probity renowned."

TALBOT: I hope so.

STANLEY: Well, I really must be getting on home. Are you coming in my direction?

TALBOT: No; the other way is shorter for me. (*Shakes hands. Part.*)

(*Exit Stanley right, Talbot left. Sounds of scuffling on left exit. Re-enter Talbot running; pauses, looks about in confusion; feels breast pocket. Hastens off stage. Enter two thieves.*)

HOWARD: Where is he? Where did he go?

MORGAN: He's gone. We can't catch him. What was the matter?

HOWARD: The needle broke.

MORGAN: Well, we'll have to try again.

HOWARD: O, he'll be on his guard after this. But we'll see what we can get out of Gormley anyway. That respectable man—did you hear them say that? ha, ha!—won't want us to expose him.

MORGAN: Well, come on; we have no time to lose here. That fellow is liable to return with help.

(Exeunt.)

Scene 4. Club.

(Five or six members discovered at rise sitting about talking.)

FIRST CLUB MEMBER: Well, how are stocks and bonds today, Thompson?

SECOND CLUB MEMBER: Very bad, very bad. Not a stir in them at all.

THIRD CLUB MEMBER: Did you attend that musical at the Adonis last night?

FIRST CLUB MEMBER: Yes; the music was very fine. I had a delightful sleep.

SECOND CLUB MEMBER *(stretching)*: Heigh-ho. This is a dull world. *(Silence for two or three minutes.)*

FOURTH CLUB MEMBER: Say, who is that oldish man that comes in here every night and goes over there by the window and reads his paper without talking to anyone?

FIFTH CLUB MEMBER: Do you mean that man that just nods at us and never speaks?

FOURTH CLUB MEMBER: Yes; that's the one.

FIRST CLUB MEMBER *(sitting up and beginning to take notice)*: Why, good gracious, you don't mean to say that you have been in this city two months and that you don't know him. That's John Gormley, the millionaire—"Honest John" his friends call him. It's his proud

record that he never wronged anyone. He surely is looked up to as the perfect model of honesty and uprightness. In fact, his friends say that when the modern Diogenes came upon Gormley he gave up his search, satisfied at last. He's famous from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific as the greatest charity worker in this continent. Institutions in all the large cities of the union stand as monuments to his philanthropy. He's the great man of the Church to which he belongs. And you never heard of him? That's queer.

SIXTH CLUB MEMBER: Speaking of Gormley, I wonder what has come over him. He used to be the jolliest sort of a fellow.

FIFTH CLUB MEMBER: I think it's business that's worrying him. I understand that he has lost heavily of late in the pit. Then, too, that latest institution he endowed must have cost him a pretty penny.

SECOND CLUB MEMBER: Do you know, I think he never recovered from the loss of his boy, Alfred. When the three other children died he bore the loss well enough, but he knew their fate. It's the uncertainty that wore him down in this other instance. Just think; not to know whether his son is dead or alive!

THIRD CLUB MEMBER: O, the boy's dead—that's certain. If he were not Gormley would have heard about it in these twenty-two years. I don't believe it's the boy he's worrying about, though he did take the boy's loss hard. But have you noticed how gray and haggard he has become in the last month and a half or two months? Why, Gormley is a young man; yet, look at him—there he is now. (*Enter Gormley, nods to them.*)

FIRST CLUB MEMBER: Well, I have an engagement.

THIRD CLUB MEMBER: So have we. Come on, Thompson, and the rest of you, or we'll be too late. Sorry to leave you, Howard, with only Gormley for company; but I hope you have a pleasant time.

FOURTH CLUB MEMBER: Don't worry; I'll manage somehow. (*Exeunt.*)

(Howard reads for a few minutes, then strolls over and engages Gormley in conversation.)

HOWARD, FOURTH CLUB MEMBER: Mr. Gormley?

GORMLEY *(looks up)*: I am Gormley. *(Terrified, glancing about.)* Sir, why do you approach me here?

HOWARD: To tell you that we failed. The needle broke against a button. He recognized us and we must leave the city. Where is our money?

GORMLEY: Your money, sir? You have not fulfilled your part of the contract. Such knavery! You'll not get a cent from me.

HOWARD: See here, Mr. Honest John Gormley, I have no time to waste. Either you pay us or we'll expose you to the entire community. How would you like that, Mr. Paragon of Honesty, Mr. Pillar of the Church?

GORMLEY: Hush, hush! Here. *(Turns over money.)* Now go away, for goodness sake, and never let me see you again. I wish I had never met you at all. *(Exit Gormley.)*

HOWARD: Good-bye, Mr. Honest John Gormley. Good-bye, Mr. Honesty. *(Laughs. Exit.)*

ACT III.

THE CONFESSION.

Scene 1. Library of Gormley's Home.

(Enter Gormley and a stranger.)

GORMLEY: Please be seated, Mr. Talbot. I received your note this morning. Do you smoke? *(Offers cigars.)*

TALBOT: Thank you. *(Selects cigar and puts it in his pocket.)* I have made several ineffectual attempts to see you, but somehow I always failed. Now that I have succeeded in finding you I'm at a loss to know just how to begin. You understand this is a very peculiar communication Mr. Clinton asked me to make. You see he was wasting away slowly and he sent for me, said he knew me, in fact, although I did not know him. He made me promise to see you, and if you deposited one-half million dollars to the credit of a certain Mrs. Helen Fortin in the First National Bank within one month I was to turn over to you a certain paper which he has entrusted to me; but if you did not comply with his behest I was to surrender the document to a competent lawyer and accept his advice on how to proceed in the matter. I guess that's about all. It is not such an easy thing to coolly ask a man to part with half a million.

GORMLEY: O, that's all right—no offense at all, I assure you. The paper has to do with a patent which we worked on together. He wants to protect his sister, so that's why he sent you here with it. *(Glances at Talbot to see how he receives these lies.)* Poor Frank was slightly insane, you know. *(Aside):* I wish he had been.

TALBOT: O, is that so? I did not know.

GORMLEY (*gathering courage from Talbot's ignorance*): Yes, it was too bad, too bad. I suppose, of course, you have the paper with you so that we could finish the business this evening. (*Eyes Talbot narrowly.*)

TALBOT (*frankly*): Yes, sir, I have; and I should be very glad to get through with this strange affair.

GORMLEY: Well, I don't know about tonight. However— (*Enter Terence.*) Well, Terence?

TERENCE: A gentleman is waiting in the hall to sae you, sor. I tould him you were busy, but he insists he must sae you. He said his name is Mr. Howard.

GORMLEY (*in confusion, aside*: I cannot let Talbot see him.) All right, Terence, you may show Mr. Talbot into the sitting room and bring in Mr. Howard. (*To Talbot*): You will excuse me, please, Mr. Talbot; the interruption is unavoidable, but it won't be long. (*Exit Terence and Talbot.*)

(*Pause. Enter Terence and Howard, right. Exit Terence.*)

GORMLEY (*angrily, yet in a low voice*): Well, sir, what are you doing here? The last time I saw you—which was only yesterday, by the way—you were thinking of going west—for your health.

HOWARD (*impudently*): Was I, now? Well, isn't that nice? The fact is I am still thinking of going west; but Morgan and I discussed the matter and we have decided that we needed more money, which you shall supply.

GORMLEY: Never! Never! You have blackmailed me enough. I'll never pay you another cent.

HOWARD (*smiling, but threatening*): We knew that you would never miss the money, especially as you have such an excellent reputation to take its place, Mr. Honesty. (*Laughs.*) Mr. Honesty.

GORMLEY: Keep quiet.

HOWARD (*very loudly*): Why should I keep quiet?

GORMLEY (*terrified at first, then attempting to bluff*): Because, sir—do you know who is in there?

HOWARD (*very loudly and insolently*): Who? Another honest man?

GORMLEY: The man you tried to kill. Shall I call him out here? He'll be very glad to see you.

HOWARD (*perceptibly terrified; arises and moves toward door. Tries to assume a nonchalant air. Speaks low*): I don't care if you do. He'll also be very glad to learn the part you had in the attacks upon him.

GORMLEY: Very well. (*Steps into sitting room and calls*): Mr. Talbot, I'm very sorry to have kept you waiting. (*Howard flees.*)

TALBOT: Such things will happen. I appreciate your position. But let us get through with that affair of Clinton.

GORMLEY (*looking at his watch*): Whew! I never realized that it was so late. It's impossible to sign all the papers and make all the necessary arrangements to-night. We'll have to defer it until tomorrow.

TALBOT: Well, I suppose, if there's no alternative— (*Thunder. Gormley strides over, opens window and looks out.*)

GORMLEY: Gracious, man, it's teeming. It's raining oceans. You can never reach your hotel in such a storm as this. It's fortunate our guest chamber is unoccupied. Stay here tonight. (*Talbot walks over to window.*)

TALBOT: Say, it is storming, isn't it? Well, thank you for your hospitality, Mr. Gormley; I'll be only too glad to accept your offer.

GORMLEY: I'll show you to your room myself. Right this way, Talbot. (*Exeunt.*)

Scene 2. About two o'clock the next morning.

GORMLEY (*muttering*): Now I can do it. He's sleeping now. I'll have that paper. Opportunity knocks only

once and this is my opportunity. (*Moves to Talbot's bedroom door and listens. Returns to library table, opens drawer, takes out revolver, "breaks" it, examines cartridges and snaps it shut. Moves toward Talbot's room with revolver in hand. Just as he reaches bedroom door enter Mrs. Gormley.*)

MRS. GORMLEY: John! John! What are you doing? (*Gormley starts nervously and attempts to conceal revolver.*)

GORMLEY: Nothing, nothing at all, Lucile. How is it you are not in bed?

MRS. GORMLEY (*coming over and taking his hands*): O, dear, I cannot sleep. I have had such terrible dreams. (*Her hand comes in contact with revolver; she draws it back quickly.*) John, what have you there? (*Horried.*) What are you going to do?

GORMLEY: See here, Lucile, be sensible. Go to bed. The man in that room has a paper—a business paper which is vitally important to me. I'm going to get it. Unless I get it I am ruined. Now go to bed, dear, and don't worry.

MRS. GORMLEY: But, John, you wouldn't steal it, would you? Even though it is important, you wouldn't take it like (*Gulps*), like a common thief!

GORMLEY (*reassuringly*): Steal? Why, certainly not. It belongs to me rightfully, dear. This man did not come by it honestly.

MRS. GORMLEY: But why don't you get possession of it legally then, John? O, I don't like this, John. Even if the paper is yours, it seems so dishonorable to take it like this.

GORMLEY: You don't understand, Lucile. I can't call upon the law to help me. If I do, my enemies will slander me. And my business affairs are in such a critical condition just now that, if they injure my reputation, I'm ruined. Come, dear, you go to bed now. It won't take me long. (*Takes her by arm and leads her towards door, right.*)

MRS. GORMLEY: But, John, when the gentleman awakes and discovers the loss of the paper he will brand you a thief and you will be ruined anyhow. Come, John, don't do it. (*Catches hold of him.*)

GORMLEY (*impatiently; jerks away*): See here, Lucile, you are worrying yourself unnecessarily. Trust me to attend to that. An open window with a broken lock, a few articles thrown around in confusion, a hue and cry in the morning about burglary, and everything is explained. (*Pause.*) If he awakes—

MRS. GORMLEY: What if he awakes? (*In a scarcely audible whisper.*)

GORMLEY: Come, come, Lucile—

MRS. GORMLEY: O, John, could you be so dishonorable? Please leave the matter to the law and trust to God.

GORMLEY (*turning away*): O, you women don't understand these business matters. You don't realize the tactics we are forced to use in business. I know you mean well, but you should confine yourself to the home and leave me to look after these business details.

MRS. GORMLEY (*passionately*): That may be, John, but we do know the difference between right and wrong, between what is base and what is noble. Besides, if he awakes you will be disgraced.

GORMLEY: Yes, it's all right to talk of honor and justice, but do you think that I can stand calmly by and see you and Patricia pauperized? See you freeze and starve like common beggars? For all my fabled millions, I haven't a half million dollars tonight. I tell you this charity work has cost me dear.

MRS. GORMLEY: Honor, indeed! Yes, honor, John. Don't think of us, or, rather don't always leave us with the thought that we have been the cause of your sin. O, rather a thousand times cold and hunger than dishonor and sin. Besides, John, if he wakes—

GORMLEY (*his jaws set and his eyes glittering*): If he wakes—(*picking up gun and fondling it*)—well, it would be better for him if he had not.

MRS. GORMLEY (*utters a piercing shriek and falls on her knees before him. Gormley draws back*): O, John, John, don't say that! You a murderer? O, John, you didn't mean that. You wouldn't do that, John. Think of your mother and of Patricia. And think of Ally, John—golden-haired little Ally up in Heaven praying for you, John. This is Ally's birthday, John, our sweet little Ally—Ally our first-born, our best loved. O, John, you didn't mean that! (*Gormley stoops over and picks her up; his frame heaves with unuttered sobs.*)

GORMLEY: Ally? Where's Ally, Lucile?

MRS. GORMLEY (*comfortingly*): In heaven, John—praying for us. Come, John, you're sick.

GORMLEY (*sadly*): You're right, Lucile. I'm sick with a sickness of the soul. May God forgive me. (*She put arms around him and comforts him.*) Pray for me, Ally. I'll tell you in the morning, Lucile. I can't do it now. (*Exit Gormley with his head resting on his wife's shoulder.*)

Scene 3. Next morning. Back parlor of Gormley home.

(*Enter Patricia Gormley, sits down at piano, plays and sings. Enter Talbot unobserved, from left, when she has finished the song.*)

TALBOT: Good morning, miss. I beg pardon for the intrusion. (*Patricia is startled at strange voice.*)

TALBOT: I did not mean to frighten you. I am your father's guest. Is Mr. Gormley up yet?

PATRICIA: My father is ill this morning and will not be able to see you. However, if my mother—

TALBOT: No, never mind, do not bother. I'm very sorry to learn that your father is ill. We can defer the matter, though. We can attend to this business whenever your father's health improves. And now I will be very much your debtor if you will kindly convey my expression of regret at his illness to Mr. Gormley.

PATRICIA (*rings servant's bell*): I shall do as you request.

(*Enter Andrew.*) Good morning.

(*Both bow. Exeunt Talbot and Andrew.*)

(*Patricia walks over to table; picks up picture and examines it for a few minutes.*)

PATRICIA (*putting photograph down at last*): O, it can't be. It's impossible. It's a mere resemblance. What makes me think so? Only this is his birthday. (*Returns to piano and plays aimlessly for a few seconds. Enter Terence.*)

PATRICIA: Terence.

TERENCE: Yes, miss.

PATRICIA: Do you remember what Alfred looked like? You know I was very small when he—when he went away.

TERENCE: Small! I should say you were, Miss Patricia—just a wee little toddler, hardly able to play with Ally, as you called him. Do I remember what he looked like? I should say I do.

PATRICIA: Does that picture (*pointing to photo*) look like him, Terence?

TERENCE (*surprised, taking picture*): Yis; why?

PATRICIA: You know today is his birthday, Terence?

TERENCE: So it is; so it is.

PATRICIA: Do you think you would know Alfred now if you were to see him grown up?

TERENCE (*startled*): Yis, I think I would; but why?

PATRICIA (*choking with sobs*): O, Terence, what do you think has become of Ally?

TERENCE (*anxiously*): Here now, Miss Patricia, don't be afhter throubling your poor little heart nadelessly. Masther Alfred is all right.

ANDREW: Please, miss, your mother would like to see you in the parlor. (*Exit Patricia.*)

ANDREW: This is a queer house—Mr. Gormley sick, the missis sobbing till her heart's fit to break, and now

Miss Patricia on the verge of tears. This is a strange house. (*Pause.*) Well, if that isn't the queerest—here this is the young master's birthday and I never thought of it. No wonder they are all feeling badly.

TERENCE (*sharply. Sniffs suspiciously and draws hand surreptitiously across his eyes*): Hould your tongue, you ould gossip.

ANDREW: Well, isn't our Irish royalty very high and mighty for himself this morning? (*Pause; looks at Terence unbelieving.*) Terence O'Donovan, it is possible—crying like a woman?

TERENCE (*wroth at being caught displaying emotion*): If you don't get out of here, you good for nothing bog-trotter, I'll throw you out bodily. How dare you pry into the business of your betters?

ANDREW: Betters, indeed! Just the same I saw Master Alfred today—that is, either him or his ghost grown up. (*Moves to door; head just sticking in room.*)

TERENCE: Saw Masther Alfred? Where? Where?

ANDREW: That's just what I'm not going to tell you, King Brian. You threatened to throw me out so I had better be going. (*Exit Andrew.*)

TERENCE: Come here, Andrew. Come back here. (*Starts to go after him, but stops.*) But it can't be. Masther Alfred's been gone twenty-two years. It can't be. (*Exit.*)

Scene 4. Back parlor of Gormley home.

(*Gormley and Mrs. Gormley discovered at rise.*)

GORMLEY: It was a lie I told you about that paper, Lucile. My whole life has been a lie to you, dear—a lie, a terrible lie.

MRS. GORMLEY (*holding up her hands*): Don't, John.

GORMLEY: I must tell you—in justice to you and Patricia. (*Pause.*) I shall start at the beginning. Before I met you, dear—just after I had left college, in

fact—Frank Clinton and I struck out for the Klondike, determined to get wealth and get it quickly, too. Five months we dug, and mined, and washed the gravel, and labored—five months such as I have never experienced since, and such as, please God, I shall never know again. Starvation, cold and death threatened us every minute. Then, one evening when we were particularly downhearted, I was on guard. I heard a noise in Fortin's cabin. Fortin was one of the men with whom that country had dealt kindly. I hastened there just as a man stole out with two heavy sacks. We grappled; I conquered and in the moonlight on the frozen earth I saw the face of my own friend, Frank Clinton. Friendship and Temptation conspired against me—I offered him his freedom for half of his loot. He accepted and we left the camp that night. But as we were going I heard a baby cry—Fortin's little baby girl. O, Lucile, that cry has haunted me all my life; and Fortin's wife awoke and saw her murdered husband and fainted. We each signed a paper admitting our part in the crime and each took a copy. This was the paper Talbot had. We separated. (*Pause.*) Then I met you, and I have lived a lie to you all my life. I have deceived the whole world, pretending to be what I was not. I have spent fortunes in charity and have advertised myself from coast to coast as a contributor to charity. I have been known as a representative member of the Church. My friends have named me "Honest." You have thought me the soul of honor. But it's all a sham, a miserable sham. What a hypocrite I am! I have deceived priest, wife, family, friends, world, all—O, how I loathe myself! My life is wasted, gone in deception, and my pride would never let me repay my stolen wealth and acknowledge my guilt.

MRS. GORMLEY (*putting her arm about his neck*): No, John, your life is not wasted. We can begin again, dear,—you and I and Patricia. We'll help you, dear. It's not too late. But you must return the money, dear.

GORMLEY: Can you forgive me, Lucile, after I have wronged you so deeply? I tried to deceive myself into believing that I was sparing you and Patricia; but now

I realize it was my own self I was saving—my own reputation and pride. Can you forgive me, Lucile?

MRS. GORMLEY: It is not for me to forgive you, John. You must look to Another, but He will surely forgive. And now we must prepare to start again. Today's a good day. It's little Ally's birthday, John.

GORMLEY: Yes, I know. I could have borne his loss better, Lucile, only I always thought that God took him from me in punishment for my sin. Yes, it's a good day to start over.

MRS. GORMLEY: But first you must return the money. Then we can plan for the future. We will leave this city, and Patricia and I can work, if need be, to help you retrieve the past.

GORMLEY (*kissing her and standing up*): You're right, Lucile. I'll wash my hands of all this hypocrisy; and, if it's not too late yet, with the help of God I'll retrieve the past. Though I lose the title "Honest" before the world, yet I become more honest than I was while I possessed it.

MRS. GORMLEY: Go now, John, I'll pray for God to give you strength. Good-bye, dear. (*Exeunt.*)

ACT IV.

Scene 1. Gormley's office.

(Gormley discovered at desk working. Enter Mr. Marston.)

MARSTON: Good-morning Mr. Gormley.

GORMLEY: Good-morning *(Pause.)* By the way, Marston, I won't need you this morning. If Taylor or Harding can't use you, you can take a vacation today.

MARSTON *(surprised)*: Thank you, Mr. Gormley. Thank you very much. *(Exit R.)*

(Gormley works. Enter Jordan C. D. Bows. Gormley nods in return.)

GORMLEY: After you have finished with my mail, Jordan, you can go over to Taylor's office. There is a gentleman coming to see me on business this morning, and under no circumstances must I be disturbed. Tell the boy that if anyone calls for me, he is to send them to Mr. Taylor. You can give Taylor whatever information he will need.

(Exit Jordan R. Gormley arises and begins to walk up and down, looks at watch, goes over and shuffles papers on desk, takes a drink, glances at watch. Enter office boy R.)

OFFICE BOY: The gentleman is here, sir. *(Gives Gormley a card.)* There's a lady with him.

GORMLEY *(agitatedly)*: A lady? What did he bring a lady along for?

OFFICE BOY: I don't know, sir.

GORMLEY: I will see the gentleman. *(Exit office boy.)*

(Gormley goes to his desk and sits down. His forehead is wrinkled in perplexity. Enter Talbot and woman. Gormley frowns.)

TALBOT: Good morning, Mr. Gormley.

GORMLEY: Good morning, sir.

TALBOT: I have taken the liberty of bringing my wife along. Mr. Gormley, my wife.

GORMLEY: Good morning, Mrs. Talbot.

TALBOT: Formerly Miss Geraldine Fortin—one time of Alaska.

GORMLEY: Miss? Miss? Did you say Fortin?

TALBOT: I did, sir; but you need not be alarmed. Everything has been forgiven. I know the history of this paper. *(Produces large sealed envelope.)* Clinton told me all that night, he was almost dying when he sent for me.

GORMLEY *(pays no attention to Talbot. Looks dumb-founded at his wife. Arises, comes around to where she is. She arises. Gormley stares into her face intently)*: It is she. It is she—*(Pause)* Girl, is your mother still alive?

MRS. TALBOT: Alive, sir, and well. *(Pause.)*

TALBOT: Come, Mr. Gormley, don't take it so hard. Anyone would have been liable to commit such a crime—just think of the temptation, and then you were young. Besides, as I understand from Clinton, you were straving and freezing. You were only human. No one can blame you.

GORMLEY: Stop, young man. It's false—false as any falsehood the Prince of Falsehoods ever invented. Don't try to make it easier for me. I have fed myself for the last thirty years on such sugary lies. I have downed my conscience, pleading extenuating circumstances—my youth, my condition. But I tell you it's all false. I candied over the sour truth with sweet, pleasant lies and I tried to think that the taste was good, but I tell you it tastes bitter, bitter, bitter. I argued with myself that, if our positions had been reversed, Fortin might have

done the same to me. I tried to lull my inner feelings with the sop that after all I had not actually committed the crime, but had only saved a friend in need and had only taken some of the money which he would have squandered anyway. But it's false (*Voice rises*). I tell you, it's false. I blamed my surroundings; I blamed anything and everything but the right thing. I even reasoned how much more good the money could do a young man, such as I, than one who had seen the best part of his life already. O, I'm weary of it. (*Silence for a minute or two.*)

MRS. TALBOT: Don't be so hard on yourself, Mr. Gormley. Father has forgiven you by now, I know. You have shown a proper disposition. I know mother and I forgave you long ago.

GORMLEY: Hard on myself? Don't fear. I've spared myself long enough. I've pampered my vanity and my selfishness long enough. I've served my pride too long. When I could have made restitution, I didn't do it on account of my accursed pride. I was afraid the news might leak out, and that I might lose my reputation for honesty. O what hypocrites we are. Clinton was right: men such as I *are* the ruin of society. (*Pause.*) Well let us to business. Here, Talbot, is the receipt showing the deposit. (*Gormley receives envelope, after he hands over receipt. Pause. Turns to Mrs. Talbot.*) And now, goodbye, and if you can in so far forgive one who has worked so much harm to your family I ask you to sometimes remember in your prayers the man who sinned and is going to try to amend. Goodbye. (*Turns away.*)

MRS. TALBOT: Goodbye, sir. I will remember. I wish you well.

GORMLEY (*to Talbot*): You, sir, I can only thank for your kindness and consideration in dealing with me. I had a son once—he would have been about your age, if he had lived—and so I would have wished him to deal with others in my place; but I thank God that he is not left to bear his father's shame and disgrace. And now, goodbye; and forget that you ever knew John Gormley.

Scene 2. Back parlor Gormley home.

(Patricia Gormley discovered at piano. Song: "O Say does not a meeting like this make amends," Moore. Enter Terence during song. Tidies things up. Patricia turns to him after song.)

PATRICIA: Good morning, Terence.

TERENCE: The top o' the mornin' to you, Miss. That's a beautiful song you played, Miss. Shure, it's you that has a fine taste when it comes to music.

PATRICIA *(playfully)*: O, I think you're giving me some of your Irish blarney.

TERENCE: Nothing of the kind, Miss. The Irish never do that. *(Makes a grimace.)*

PATRICIA *(becoming grave)*: Do you know why I was playing that air, Terence? I was thinking of Alfred *(Very short pause.)* You know I thought I saw him yesterday.

TERENCE: Thought you saw him yesterday?

PATRICIA: Yes; yesterday was his birthday, you know.

TERENCE: Yes; but here he's never been heard from these twenty-two years, Miss—dead, most likely. But now that you mention it, I remember Andrew said the same thing to me yesterday. Of course no one pays any attention to Andrew—at last, no one with in your sinse does. Is the whole house going crazy?

PATRICIA: What makes you think that he's dead, Terence?

TERENCE: Why, Miss, we have never gotten trace or tidings of him all the time he's been gone, and, with all the money your father spent and the detectives he hired and the people he had interested in the affair, we surely ought to have learned something about him if he were alive.

PATRICIA: That's true. But I thought I saw him. *(Enter Mrs. Gormley.)*

MRS. GORMLEY: Good morning, Terence.

TERENCE: Top o' the morin' to you, ma'am. (*Leaving room. Exit L.*)

MRS. GORMLEY: I have some news for you, Patricia.

PATRICIA (*evincing interest*): O, mama, what is it? Is it about——? Is it bad news?

MRS. GORMLEY (*gravely*): It isn't good, dear. Your father's financial condition has changed for the worse. In short, we'll have to give up our home and all that we've been accustomed to. In fact, we are going to move to another city.

PATRICIA: We'll be all right, mama. There are many other people who are in no better circumstances. Poor daddy—how does he take it? Can I help him?

MRS. GORMLEY: Yes, dear, we both can help him to bear the shock by being brave. He must discontinue all his charity work, too. O, how I wish your brother was living now to help him stem the current.

PATRICIA: I can help and I will help. I can teach music, give painting lessons, teach elocution. I can do anything to help daddy.

(*Re-enter Terence.*)

TERENCE: A gentleman to see Mr. Gormley about some charity work. I tould him Mr. Gormley is sick; and now he wants to see you, ma'am.

MRS. GORMLEY (*sighing. To Patricia*): Well, I suppose it had to come sometime. I might as well begin now to notify them that your father will have to give up his charity work. (*Exit R. Pause.*)

TERENCE: Oi've been questioning Andrew, Miss; but I can't larn anything from him. One minute he's sure it was Masther Alfred, and the next instant he don't know but it might have been only a resimblance.

PATRICIA: I would not bother about it, Terence. I was mistaken. It's improbable—impossible. It was only a great resemblance, as Andrew said. (*Pause.*) Poor daddy. Is he in the library now, Terence?

TERENCE: Yes, Miss. (*Exit C. D. Enter Gormley L.*)

GORMLEY: Terence, I want you to pay off all the old servants for me, and tell them that I can't keep them any longer. I'm a ruined man. Thank them for their long and faithful service to my family and bid them farewell for me. I can't see them myself.

TERENCE: Begging your pardon, sor, I want to tell you that Oi'll stay with your family as long as one of you is alive, pay or no pay; and I know the rest of them fale the same way. So please, sor, don't talk about bidding farewells, sor.

GORMLEY: Listen to me, Terence; and don't make this severing of old ties harder for me than necessary. I must leave this home, go to another city and start life anew. We'll be very poor, and won't be able to afford even a single servant.

TERENCE: What if you can't, sor? Will you be any the worse man if you are poor? We'll all go along and help you to begin again. So don't say anything more of parting. Miss Patricia is looking for you in the library, sor. (*Exeunt, C. D.*)

Scene 3. Back parlor of Gormley home.

(Enter Terence with woman heavily veiled. A younger woman, veiled, and a man with overcoat up around his face and hat drawn down go to enter, but she tells them to wait outside.)

TERENCE: Plaze wait here. Mr. Gormley will be in in a minute. (*She seats herself R. C.*) (*Exit Terence.*)
(*Enter Gormley.*)

GORMLEY: Did you wish to see me?

MRS. FORTIN: Are you John Gormley?

GORMLEY: I am. Whom have I the pleasure of addressing? (*She raises her veil. He studies her face for a few seconds; then steps back.*) Tom Fortin's wife!

MRS. FORTIN: The same; and I came to thank you.

GORMLEY: To thank me? For what can you thank

me? Is it possible that you can enter the house of the man who liberated your husband's murderer and stole the money which rightfully belonged to you and your child? Thank me? You can only curse me. But now that you are here, I will make a clean breast of it all. I didn't kill your husband. That's the first thing. Whatever rag of comfort I have in these times comes from the knowledge that I am free from that crime, at least. But there my innocence ends. I stole your money, I kept you and your baby in want and suffering, and I have lived a lie. I foisted myself off upon my wife, my children, my friends, my Church, the world, as the perfect type of honesty and Christian charity. I have deceived everyone, but God; and I know now that I failed to deceive myself, though I thought at the time I had succeeded. (*Mrs. Fortin makes as if to interrupt him, but he stops her.*) Don't interrupt me now. Let me finish. I must tell you to the end. There were many times I could have returned the money, but I was afraid that the world would learn of my guilt, and I would lose my good reputation. So instead I turned to charity and built homes for the poor and the infirm, but, Pharisee that I was, I placarded it all over with my own name, so that men would see, and approve and know how good I was. And I rejoiced when all the papers hailed me as the greatest friend of Humanity in the century. (*She goes to interrupt him again.*) Don't be misled into imagining that I did this even now of my own free will. I did my best to get possession of that document Clinton confided to the care of your son-in-law, and I failed. I paid the penalty of crime only because I had to. I confided in my wife and she induced me to make restitution. I resisted paying you with all my might; and I tried to convince myself that it was my wife and child I was sparing, but it was myself—and my selfish pride. I don't ask your forgiveness—that is impossible. (*Enter Mrs. Gormley.*) Here is the woman—the best woman that ever lived, not excepting my own mother—the woman that rescued me from my crime—my wife. (*Mrs. Fortin and Mrs. Gormley bow.*)

MRS. FORTIN: Forgive you, John Gormley? I have forgiven you long ago; but I also need forgiveness. You are not the only one who has sinned. I also have something to confess. I knew that you had shared in my husband's stolen wealth, and I followed you slowly from state to state. (*Enter Patricia.*) I had lost track of your accomplice. I wanted revenge, but I could not appeal to the law, because I had no evidence against you, so I struck at you through your family. I stole your son.

MR. GORMLEY }
MRS. GORMLEY } Ally? Where is he.

MRS. FORTIN: Yes, your Alfred. I intended to hold him for ransom, but was afraid of being apprehended if I made overtures for ransom. A relative took care of him for me. He is here. Alfred! (*Enter Alfred Gormley, alias Grahame Talbot.*)

MRS. GORMLEY: Alfred.

ALFRED: Mother. (*They embrace.*) *Enter Geraldine Fortin and Terence quietly.*

ALFRED: Father!

MR. GORMLEY: Son, I am unworthy to be called your father. (*They shake hands.*) And you are the son-in-law of the woman I robbed? And to think I tried to kill you with my own hand. What strange tricks Fate plays upon us.

TERENCE: (*moving around*): Shure it's Masther Alfred, shure enough, only grown up. Many's the time Oi've carried you about on my back and played horsie with you, lad.

(*Mrs. Gormley crying for joy. Patricia trying to comfort her. Alfred talking to her, arm around her.*)

MRS. FORTIN: Can you forgive me?

GORMLEY: Forgive? I have nothing to forgive. God has been good to me far beyond my deserts. He has turned my life from false to true. He has changed my house of sand to one of stone.

(*Mrs. Fortin and Gormley in center shaking hands;*

Mrs. Gormley sobbing quietly on sofa (1) with Patricia on far side of her and Alfred near back with an arm about her. Geraldine Fortin and Terence on right.)

Curtain.



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